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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MARR](#) [AF](#)  
SUBJECT: New ISAF Headquarters Approach to PRTs:  
Coherence

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¶1. Summary: The Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) has assumed the mantle of command of ISAF. They are bringing a commitment and plan of action to the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) program that should bring greater coherence to the effort. We strongly support this initiative, and recommend that we cooperate fully. This might even include making our State PRT officers more directly responsible to ISAF HQ. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Prior and subsequent to the ISAF change of command on May 4, we have had numerous meetings with the ARRC personnel who are taking over and will be responsible for the PRT program. We are very impressed by the thought and effort they are putting into improving the performance of the 13 PRTs ISAF will control in Phase 3.

¶3. (SBU) The most important elements of these contacts are encapsulated in a briefing given by British Brigadier General Dickie Davis to the PRT Executive Steering Committee Working Group (ESC WG) on the subject of QPRT Coherence. Q Brigadier Davis is the Chief Engineer at ISAF and reconstruction and develop programs, as well as the PRTs, will be in his portfolio.

PRT Coherence

¶4. (SBU) General Davis, who was the first UK PRT

commander in Mazar-e Sharif as a colonel, listed six areas in which ISAF hopes to bring coherence to the PRT program: Policy, Policy Support, Process, Training, Information, and Review. On Policy, he stressed the importance of making ESC guidance available to the PRTs and conforming PRT programs to that guidance. There has been a proposal to make ESC meetings every other month instead of quarterly, and to provide more opportunity for discussion rather than just presentations.

15. (SBU) On Policy Support, he listed the PRT ESC Working Group (WG) as the mechanism, and giving timely support to the ESC as the goal. ISAF intends to spend more effort on WG projects, and will make staffing available for those projects, although exactly in what form has yet to be determined. ISAF staff see a functioning ESC and ESC WG at the center of all other efforts to improve the PRTs.

16. (SBU) Regarding Process, there is a belief at HQ ISAF that there is too much variation in the way that PRT commanders and civilian components in various PRTs approach the mission. While understanding that national caveats will always play a role, and that PRTs have to be flexible enough to meet the particular challenges in their regions, there is also recognition that without stronger guidance and coordination from the center, it will not be possible to push ISAF, or more importantly, central government programs out to the provinces in any coherent fashion. As a first step to bringing this to fruition, they have embarked on compiling a PRT handbook that will collect ESC-agreed guidance and best practices. While the final status is under consideration, they hope to make it as binding as

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possible. They have invited the international community to join the working group, and will seek comments from the ESC before going final. Target timeframe for completion is July.

17. (SBU) To get an early start on Training, ISAF sent a major to monitor the April National Defense University course for incoming PRT officers, and was well represented at the UN Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA) course in May. They were impressed by the potential for such courses to unify thinking on PRT missions and procedures, and are exploring how best to institutionalize such training so that all senior incoming PRT personnel are exposed. There will be another UNAMA course in October with ISAF support and USG participation.

18. (SBU) Information is being approached through a traveling program and a headquarters-based program. On the travel side, there will be PRT Engagement Teams that travel to the provinces. Exact composition and tasking is still being developed, but it is envisioned to include UNAMA and embassy representatives, as well as technical support staff. On the other hand, there will be a PRT Helpdesk that will take any and all questions, from basic background information to major policy issues, and get an answer back out to the field as quickly as possible. Davis hopes that this process will help form a link between ISAF and the PRT that will complement the support of their respective embassies.

19. (SBU) Finally, on Review, ISAF has taken considerable interest in the ESC Provincial Indicators process that was finally put in place by the former ISAF staff just as it was departing. Although an ESC initiative, the program will need

strong coordination from Kabul if it is to be meaningful, and ISAF is in the best position to provide that. Although expressing some reservations about the questions and methods, ISAF HQ took the reasonable approach that it was better to use the baseline this will provide, and generally refine the process, than start again from scratch.

Comment and Thoughts for the Future:

¶10. (SBU) We strongly support the steps ISAF is taking to bring greater coherence to the PRT program, and intend to support it as much as possible. Our most serious concern is that the command relationship between the headquarters and the PRTs remains weak, and almost everything General Davis hopes to accomplish will have to be done more through persuasion than by direction. For our part, we have always instructed our State representatives at ISAF PRTs to be as responsive as possible to their commanders and to requests from ISAF in Kabul. They are to consider themselves an ISAF asset as well as an Embassy one. We are also providing support to the handbook, training, and provincial indicators efforts.

¶11. (SBU) Our most significant contribution to date has been the establishment of a USAID position at

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ISAF HQ to act as an adviser and to provide coordination with our bilateral programs. The incumbent had the opportunity to train with the ARRC in Europe prior to deployment, and is well-integrated into the ISAF structure. We are in the process of establishing a similar State Department position in the office of the political adviser, and hope to have someone in place by late August.

¶12. (SBU) As ISAF moves to Phase 4, possibly by late Fall, it will oversee all of the PRTs. If our experience continues to be a positive one, and we are confident we can significantly influence the direction of the PRT program through our civilian placements at ISAF and an increase in American military presence (as some of CJTF76 personnel and responsibilities are transferred), we may want to take stronger steps.

¶13. (SBU) One such measure would be to encourage ISAF to require every PRT to host two political officers whose primary responsibility would be to it, and not to their lead nation's MFA. We could offer our 20 field officers to form the basis for that pool, with other lead nations responsible for providing the other 30 or so officers necessary. This would strengthen the PRT program by giving ISAF more control over PRT activities, would increase our insights into some provinces where we currently do not see PRT reporting (which would then be available to us through NATO), and would resolve our recurring bilateral problems with housing our officers at other countries. ISAF could set down minimum standards for communications, housing, food, and, most importantly, force protection services. If we decide to move in this direction we should attempt to do this under the current, primarily British, HQ. If we wait until ISAF X, which will be more heavily American, it may be greeted with suspicion by some in NATO. End Thoughts and Comment.

¶14. (SBU) Key HQ ISAF Staff with PRT Responsibilities:

-- Lead: Brigadier General Dickie Davis  
-- Development Advisers (DEVADs): USAID Michelle Parker, DFID Clare Harkin

-- Political (POLADs): Terence Jagger and Paul Wyatt (both are partially dedicated; Terence is FE-MC equivalent)  
-- Coordinating officer for PRT Coherence: LTC Petersen  
-- Secretary to the ESC and WG support: Major Matthew Swannell  
-- Operational analyst supporting Provincial Indicators: Mr. Rob Grossman  
-- Several other military officers and supporting staff will be involved with delivering 'PRT coherence'  
-- Drazen Hrastic, NATO Senior Civilian Representative POLAD, is also engaged, although this is a partnership not under ISAF command.  
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